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Media Release

Violent and sexualised media impacting adversely on children

Graham Vimpani, Professor of Community Child and Family Health at the University of Newcastle, has spoken out strongly about the influence on children of exposure to media violence and sexualised content.

In the wake of the passage of the Federal government Bill to allow an R18+ classification for computer games, and the release this week of the "Growing up fast and furious" book (edited by Dr Wayne Warburton and Danya Braunstein), Prof Vimpani observed 'The negative impact of a diet rich in violence is a very important issue on which the jury is no longer out. The question is not whether children need to be protected from such material, but rather how that is best achieved'.

He continued 'I think it is very difficult to quarantine adult only material (R18+) and prevent children from accessing it - given parental work patterns, and that adolescents are likely to be home alone more than occasionally. Putting the sole responsibility on parents to ensure their children don't access R-rated material in games, on DVDs, or on the internet ignores the chaotic lifestyles that many of the most vulnerable children are exposed to and the fact that many kids have access to this hardware in their own bedrooms. It is simply unrealistic to expect parents to be satisfactory gatekeepers'.

Prof Vimpani said 'It is likely that there is differential susceptibility such that the most vulnerable are most at risk from a toxic media diet'.

He continued 'An increase in the prevalence of disruptive behaviour disorders over the last quarter century has been well documented in the UK, with double the rate of conduct disorder, a 50% increase in hyperactivity and a near-doubling of the rate of emotional problems. Anecdotal evidence suggests similar developments have been taking place in Australia. It would be naïve to conclude that access to violent and sexualised media makes no contribution to this. How much, rather than whether it contributes, is the question'.

ACCM President Prof Elizabeth Handsley welcomed Prof Vimpani's comments and said 'ACCM has long considered children's exposure to violent and sexualised media to be a significant public health issue, and one that deserves far greater examination and action from the federal Government than is apparent at present. ACCM is calling for more parent- friendly media regulation and evidence-based classification systems'.

ACCM is a unique national community organisation, which strives for a media environment that supports the health, safety and wellbeing of Australian children. It is committed to promoting healthy choices and stronger voices in children's media. www.childrenandmedia.org.au

For more information or to arrange an interview, please phone Prof Vimpani on 0408484427 or Prof Handsley on 0448898185 or email admin@youngmedia.org.au

Promoting healthy choices and stronger voices in children's media

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